Terai – Madhesh Movement in Nepal

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Class of 2017

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**1. REPORT DATE**
01-04-2017

**2. REPORT TYPE**
STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**3. DATES COVERED**

**4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE**
Terai – Madhesh Movement in Nepal

**5. AUTHOR(S)**
Colonel Santosh Kumar Dhakal
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**6. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)**
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**7. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)**
U.S. Army War College, 122 Forbes Avenue, Carlisle, PA 17013

**8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER**

**9. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)**

**10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)**

**11. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT**
Distribution A: Approved for Public Release. Distribution is Unlimited.

**12. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES**
Word Count: 9,411

**13. ABSTRACT**
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**15. SUBJECT TERMS**
Strategic Research Paper

**16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:**

<table>
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<th>a. REPORT</th>
<th>b. ABSTRACT</th>
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**17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT**
UU

**18. NUMBER OF PAGES**
50

**19. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON**
Abstract

In the aftermath of the political transition of 2006, Nepal’s elected Constituent Assembly embarked on a much awaited writing of a people’s mandated Constitution. It was undeniably a significant ambition, as previous such ventures had never seen any fruition in the course of a series of earlier political transitions. It took almost seven years and two elections to finally draft the Constitution. However, the elation of having a new Constitution was relatively short lived as a series of protests mainly by the Madheshi people broke out in the southern plains of the Terai region over the key issues in the Constitution. The bone of contention lay within issues regarding state border delimitation, proportional representation, and provision of citizenship. An open border with India and a sympathetic Indian political establishment further helped to bolster the movement resulting in a six-month long blockade virtually bringing an economic collapse in 2015. The Terai-Madhesh movement presents far reaching and potentially detrimental political, social and security implications for Nepal.
Terai – Madhesh Movement in Nepal

In the wake of the 2006 People's Movement that established the country as a republic and paved the way for a federal system, Nepal is still undergoing unprecedented political and societal changes.¹ Over a tenuous seven year period, the duly formed Constituent Assembly, in its second tenure, finally managed to come up with a new constitution, which was heralded as a significant milestone in Nepal's political history. However, the joy and elation of a new constitution was relatively short-lived, as the Madhesi people, hailing from the southern plains of Nepal, expressed their discontent and disapproval over a number of provisions in the new constitution, especially the demarcation of state-boundaries.² Perceiving they were short-changed by the new constitution, the Madhesi people embarked upon a series of protests, leading to a nation-wide blockade of the country in 2015 and causing a massive toll on the livelihood of the Nepalese people across the whole country.³

Apart from the economic and societal costs, the Terai Madhesh movement also has national security implications for Nepal, which are compounded by India's involvement in the nation's internal political affairs. India, a major stakeholder in South Asian geopolitics did not welcome the new constitution and believed it failed to address the aspirations and grievances of all communities, especially the Madhesi community.⁴ In a move ostensibly designed to pressurize the incumbent Nepalese Government, India tacitly stopped the passage of all goods and commodities bound for a land-locked Nepal; all under the pretext of security concerns across the Indo-Nepal border. As a result, Indo-Nepal relations were at an all-time low, which continues even after a number of subsequent state visits by leaders from both countries.⁵
The Terai Madhesh movement has also resulted in an array of security challenges for Nepal; the most pressing being communal violence stemming from rifts between the Madheshi and the Pahadi (Hilly) communities. This of course threatens the social harmony of the country. Moreover, irredentist and secessionist undertones in the Terai Madhesh movement, fueled by radical Madheshi factions, pose a considerable threat. In the same vein, spill-over effects from the movement to other vulnerable parts of the country further add to the security challenges. In such context, a study of the Terai Madhesh issue becomes critical in formulating adequate measures towards maintaining the national integrity of Nepal.

The complexity of the problem cannot be decoupled from the geography of the country. The geographic reality has separated the population and created difficulties bridging the existing social and ethnic gap. The multitude of languages and ethnicities further aggravate the tension. As all politics are local, the movement needs local actors to sustain it. It is essential to examine the role of political parties from Terai in the newly promulgated constitution and government, and the influence of external actors, as well as the impact of these on national security. The role of external players and internal actors in tandem threaten the national security of the country. This study will examine the government’s response to the problem using elements of national power followed by recommendations.

Genesis of the Terai Madhesh Movement

Before delving into the core issues of the Terai Madhesh problem, it is imperative to examine and analyze the geopolitics, social structure, and ethnic and cultural mosaic of Terai Madesh. This chapter highlights geopolitical, societal, and economic aspects of
the region. The chapter will draw a connection between these elements and the rise of
the Madhesh movement.

Nepal is a landlocked country located in South Asia between China and India. It
has an area of 147,181 square kilometers (km) and shares a 1,236 km border with
China to the north. It shares its eastern, southern, and western borders with India, 1,690
km in length. Figure 1 shows the map of Nepal with its bordering countries.

![Figure 1. Map of Nepal](image)

Defeat in the Anglo-Nepal war of 1816 shrank Nepal’s size to the present
borders. Two major areas of the Terai, the southern plain area, were lost and Nepal had
to agree to British suzerainty.9 The war ended with the Treaty of Sugauli"of 1816, which
should have been terminated when British left India in 1947.10
King Prithvi Narayan Shah, the architect of the unification campaign of modern Nepal, rightly expressed the geopolitical sensitivity by calling Nepal a yam between two boulders. The British ruling in India envisioned Nepal as a “buffer state” between British India and China. After its independence, India continued a similar policy vis-à-vis Nepal. Correspondingly, China feels threatened by the Free Tibet Movement from Nepal. The geopolitical sensitivity of both political rivals practicing opposite political ideologies, challenges the national interest of Nepal.

**Geopolitics of Terai**

Geographically, Nepal is divided into three regions—the mountainous Himalayan region in the north covering 15 percent of the total landmass, the hilly region in the middle covering 61.9 percent and the Terai plains in the south covering the remaining 23.1 percent.
An outsider to Nepal can have considerable difficulties in identifying differences between Terai and Madhesh, and also understanding what constitutes the Madhesi population. Two terms frequently used in Nepal, “Inner Terai” and “Outer Terai” are useful in beginning to understand the movement. The three broad low-lying river valleys north of the Siwalik Range are referred to as Bhitri Madhesh or inner Terai, while the plains north of Indo-Nepal border up to the Siwalik constitute the outer Terai. The Terai people encompass all of the people from inner and outer Terai including Tharus. As a result, the terms Terai and Madhesh are used synonymously. Technically, Madhesi by definition means people who inhabit the flat southern region of Nepal (the Terai Plains) which is also called Madhesh. However, after the Terai uprising of 2007, Tharu communities hailing from western Terai have refused to be regarded as Madhesi. In this paper’s context, the term Terai Madhesh refers to all communities including the Tharus, and people of Outer and Inner Terai. The term Pahadis means people from the hills. However, the Madheshis are not generally called Pahadis even if
they have lived in the hills for many generations. Similarly, Pahadis will continue to be called Pahadis, irrespective of the place they live.\textsuperscript{19}

The Common language of the Pahadis, to include those in the Terai region, is Nepali which is the official language. However the majority of the Terai inhabitants and some Pahadis have other languages, including Maithili, Bhojpuri, Awadhi, Tharu and Hindi. Some of these languages are predominant in northern India, across the border, which is another determinant of cultural affinity between the people on both sides of Indo-Nepal border.

As a region, Terai Madhesh is far more diverse in terms of ethnic/caste composition than the hilly and mountain regions. The three caste groups – Brahman, Rajput and Kayastha – comprise 0.835% of the total population and are the most powerful population groups in terms of literacy, economic, and political status not only in
Terai, but across the whole country. The Vaisya caste group, which is considered a lesser category, is comprised of thirty caste groups. These include Yadav, Halwai, Koeri, Hajam, Sonar, Lohar, Rajbhar and comprise 14.5% of the total population. The low caste groups of the Terai, called Sudra or untouchables account for 4.5% of the total population. According to a 2011 census, there are 15 groups of so-called untouchables.21

**Economy**

Blessed with abundant fertile land and better infrastructure, the Terai is the most productive agricultural and industrial region of Nepal, and is known as the breadbasket of the country.22 Moreover, the Terai region shares an open border with India and therefore finds itself under powerful Indian social and economic influence in comparison to other regions. According to Economic White Paper issued by Nepal’s Ministry of Finance in 2015, Terai is a significant source of revenue, with more than 2,200 industries and custom points that contribute to revenue generation.23

Despite having significant potential, economic activities in the Terai region have waned in the recent years with both agricultural and industrial output experiencing a decline. This downturn is largely attributed to changes in social demography where less people want to continue in agriculture. A growing number of Terai inhabitants, especially the younger generation, are leaving the agricultural sector to find their fortune elsewhere in foreign land. Hundreds of thousands of Terai youths fly off to provide cheap labor to the Gulf, South East Asia and beyond.24 Similarly, incessant protests by workers’ unions combined with a deteriorating law and order situation have caused a marked decline in industrial output and has also discouraged potential investors.25 Until
1965, Nepal was the fifth largest rice exporting country in the world. Terai alone used to produce 11 major crops and contribute 55 percent of the nation’s agronomy. 

The First Madhesh Uprising 2007

In the aftermath of 2006 people's movement, 83 Maoist representatives were sworn in as Members of Parliament on January 15, 2007. The entry of erstwhile Maoist rebels into the political mainstream marked a new beginning in Nepal's political history. On the same day, the interim Parliament, dominated by the Seven Party Alliance (SPA) and the United Communist Party Nepal Maoist (UCPN) promulgated the Interim Constitution of Nepal. Many marginalized communities, including Madheshis, expressed their discontent with the Interim Constitution citing the lack of provision for a federal state system. After the release of the interim constitution, the Madhesi people started their general protest, and on January 19, 2007, Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) protesters clashed with Maoist cadres. Madhesi activists blocked major trade routes, leading to resulting in shortages of food, fuel, cooking gas and other essential commodities in Kathmandu. Government actions such as curfews were largely ineffective and could not bring the situation under control. By August 30th, many people were killed and over 800 were wounded. On August 30, 2007, Upendra Yadav, the head of MJF, and Ram Chandra Poudel, on behalf of the Government of Nepal, signed a 22 Point Agreement and the movement temporally subsided. The core point in the agreement implied a change in the constitution to enact a federal system of government.

The Second Madhesh Uprising 2008

The second Madhesh Uprising started in February, 2008 and lasted for almost three weeks, with more than a dozen Madheshi dying as a result of violence. The
second movement was organized by a coalition of a number of Madheshi groups—the United Democratic Madheshi Front (UDMF), the Rajendra Mahato led Sadhavana party, the Terai Madhesh Loktantric Party, and the MJF. According to the coalition, protests were organized in response to the government's non-compliance with the 2007 agreement. However, the Madhesi coalition suffered a split in their alliance, with various groups such as Tharus, Terai Dalits and Terai Muslims breaking away from a Madhesi identity. The movement officially ended on February 28, 2008 with the signing of an eight-point agreement which was just as ineffective as the previously signed 22 point agreement. However, this new agreement was more specific on issues regarding federalism, the inclusion of Madhesi in security forces, and an increase in Madhesi representation in the Constituent Assembly.

The Third Madhesh Movement 2015

The political situation of Nepal changed dramatically when the four major parties reached a 16-point agreement on June 8, 2015, envisioning eight provinces in a federal Nepal. The agreement subsequently left the demarcation issue to be resolved by a Federal Commission. Notwithstanding its high profile participation, the agreement was strongly challenged by a number of political and non-political groups—the alliance of 28 parties, the UDMF and later the Supreme Court. Nevertheless, on June 30, 2015, a preliminary draft of the constitution was finally brought before the Constituent Assembly. The draft constitution was vehemently opposed by agitating groups, spearheaded by the Madeshi parties. These groups resorted to violent protests, which included the infamous Tikapur incident on 24 August 2015, where protestors brutally killed eight policemen. This incident served as a tipping point as the Terai Madhesh movement flared up across all districts in the Terai region. Protests became even more
aggressive after the promulgation of the constitution on September 20, 2015 because Madhesh based parties categorically rejected the new constitution, expressing dissatisfaction with the demarcation of federal provinces and election constituencies, and asserting that the constitution did not address the grievances of the Madhesi people or other minority and indigenous ethnic groups.  

In a bid to increase pressure on the government, Madhesi groups launched border-centric protests, whereby they completely blocked the flow of goods and commodities across the border. Interestingly, India surreptitiously joined in and tacitly imposed a blockade from its side, citing security concerns across Indo-Nepal border. The blockade completely paralyzed the daily lives of common Nepali people, as they suffered acute shortages of daily commodities including fuel and cooking gas.

To quell the uprising, on January 24, 2016, the government of Nepal endorsed an amendment on three articles of the constitution commensurate with Madhesi demands. Finally, on February 5, 2016, after 134 days of blockade, the UDMF called off their protests. Throughout the whole movement, around 50 people lost their lives including 10 police. However, to date the UDMF has asserted that their movement lives on and they have issued blatant warnings that they would continue their protests if their demands were not properly addressed.

Causes of the Madhesi Uprising of 2007 and 2008

The root causes associated with the uprising can be traced back to the era when Nepal became a state; therefore, the recent uprising can be regarded as an outburst of deep-rooted problems with strong historical underpinnings. These dynamics include, long standing discrimination associated with the domination of the Madhesi communities by the Pahadi community. This includes cultural domination - Daura
Suruwals is the national attire rather than dhoti, the Madhesi attire. This also includes discrimination in citizenship; the 1964 and 1990 Citizenship law required that applicants had to know Nepali language to become citizens. Upper caste (Brahman, Rajput and Kayastha) domination, economic domination, and gender discrimination were some other root causes that fueled the movement. In addition, the decade long Maoist insurgency, with its ethnic oriented campaigns, helped to radicalize the issue. It is relevant to note that the Maoist movement helped establish various ethnic fronts that raised social issues such as language rights, under – representation, and linguistic inequality. It should be noted that the delimitation of federal states alone will not solve the Madhesh’s core issues because of the prevalence of various political and social anomalies in Madhesi societies including domination by higher-caste groups, the practice of witch-craft and dowry system, gender inequality, and corruption. Until such issues are addressed, it is inevitable that social discrimination will continue and a handful of elite groups will stay dominant in the region, despite any political changes.

Key Drivers of Madhesh Movement 2015

On June 8, 2015, four major parties in the Constituent Assembly, the Nepali Congress (NC), United Marxist-Leninist (UML), United Communist Party of Nepal (UCPN-Maoist) and Madhesi Janadhikar Forum Democratic (MJFD) agreed to fast track the constitution by signing a 16-point agreement. Major highlights of the agreement were the federation of the country into eight provinces (names of the provinces to be decided later by two-third majority of the state assembly of respective provinces) and the formation of a federal commission to delineate state boundaries. This initiative was strongly opposed by the United Democratic Madhesi Front (UDMF), which was essentially an alliance of four Madhesh-based parties. In retribution, they launched a
number of protests demanding a statute with clearly stated names and demarcations of the federal states. They also strongly called for eliminating the 16-point pact along with the draft constitution.

As a coalition front, the UDMF acted as a major driving force and provided key leadership for the Madheshi uprising. Yet, the majority of leaders of the UDMF, although some were elected in 2008, lost in the 2013 Constitution Assembly election. Thus, the leaders such as Upendra Yadav, Mahantha Thakur, and Rajendra Mahato, despite their claims to be saviors of the Madheshi cause, were trying to rebuild their own support base through the movement. This is supported by their apparent attempts to outdo each other in unleashing violence and radicalism in competition for popularity within their constituencies.

Moreover, the Madheshi alliance has been inconsistent in its demands and ambivalent about its priorities. For example, Madheshi parties at times appeared to be more concerned with the inclusion of their districts in the Madhesh province. Yet, in other instances, Madheshi parties looked more concerned about proportionate representation, to avoid a repeat of the humiliating defeats in future elections they had suffered in 2013. As Madheshi leaders’ demands became increasingly uncertain in each new talk and meeting, it became even more daunting to settle their dispute with the government.

Paradoxically, the promulgation of the much-awaited Constitution proved to be another causal factor behind the Madheshi uprising. Voicing outright dissent over the Constitution, the UDMF presented a 35-points demand, that included concerns on delimitation, and proportional and inclusive representation of the marginalized
communities in state agencies.44 After four rounds of inconclusive talks with the government, the UDMF submitted an 11-point demand on November 30, 2015.45 Currently, provisions in the constitution remain a major sticking point for the Madheshi movement.

External Factor (Indo-Nepal Relations)

Socio-cultural and religious similarities and a porous border characterizes the relationship between Nepal and India. Cross border marriages and common religious and social activities reflect the social bond between the people of the two countries, especially in the border districts of southern Nepal. It has led to a strong bond between people across the border.46 However, at the political level the Government of India (GOI) still maintains the British legacy of dominating the neighborhood.47

Monarchy in Nepal was only titular during the Rana regime which lasted for 104 years from 1846 to 1951.48 To continue the autocratic rule, the dynastic Rana ruler kept Nepal in isolation and subordinated itself to the British East India Company until 1859. The wave of independence in the region led Nepal to oppose the Rana regime. The people’s democratic movement of 1950, with support from India, brought the downfall of the regime and restored the monarchy in Nepal, ending with “India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship.” The treaty has given India leeway to meddle in the internal affairs of Nepal.49

The Indian interest was most prominent immediately after the Chinese offensive in Tibet in October 7, 1950. As a geopolitical threat, the Government of India (GOI) considered the Himalayas its frontier, which led them to assign a military mission to Nepal with the pretext of providing professional training for the Nepalese armed forces. The Indian mission occupied the border outposts with China. In addition, various
advisors were assigned to assist the Government of Nepal, a practice that continued until the death of King Tribhuvan. After his death, the new political establishment under a democratic system, with the support of then King Mahendra, entered the international arena and convinced the Indian establishment to withdraw advisors and its military mission.\textsuperscript{50}

In 1960, King Mahendra, deposed the multiparty government and installed a partyless \textit{Panchayat} system considered to be more compatible with the Nepalese system. Initially, the GOI expressed its dissatisfaction and termed it as a royal coup, but within six months of the dismissal of the elected government, India started helping the royal government.\textsuperscript{51} King Mahendra’s astute diplomacy, followed by King Birendra’s rule, guided the \textit{Panchayat} system until 1990.

The GOI’s frustration with the Nepalese monarchy started with the proposal of a “Zone of Peace” by the latter. It was designed as a tool to expand Nepal’s international reach as a small state.\textsuperscript{52} But, the GOI considered it as non-essential as it perceived no threat to Nepal from her immediate neighbors. American, Chinese, and Soviet support was immaterial for India as she never supported the Nepalese proposal.\textsuperscript{53} Furthermore, Nepalese acquisition of a Chinese air defense system fueled India’s anger and resulted in an economic embargo in 1989 and India fueling an anti-government movement in Nepal.\textsuperscript{54}

As a two-pronged strategy, India used democratic forces to stage protests for the restoration of a multiparty democracy and proposed a draft treaty to the King of Nepal establishing Nepal as an Indian protectorate. But the king decided to restore multiparty democracy rather than submit the sovereignty of the country.\textsuperscript{55} During the thirty years of
the *Panchayat* era, the elites of the Madhesi communities were given important posts in the local government which led them to support the royal regime.\(^5\)_6

Despite being the largest democracy in the world, India supported the communists’ insurgents for political leverage against her neighbor in the decade long Maoist insurgency in Nepal (1996-2006).\(^5\)_7 However, India’s policy did not remain consistent and changed with the phases of the insurgency. After the escalation of the Maoist insurgency in its own territory and the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York, the United States of America regarded the Maoists as terrorists on par with al Qaeda, Abu Sayaf, and Lebanon’s Hezbollah and compelled India to change her stance.\(^5\)_8 The United States’ concern was to check the radical communist insurgency at any cost in Nepal, which forced India to declare the Maoists terrorists. India started showing concern and offered security assistance in the form of training and material to the Government of Nepal while at the same time maintaining its dual policy towards the insurgents. The Nepali Maoists were using Indian territory for shelter, meetings, and importing arms and ammunition. After the Royal coup of February 1, 2005, India started facilitating an alliance between the Maoists and the mainstream political parties of Nepal against the monarchy.\(^5\)_9 By providing support to the Maoist insurgents, India achieved its long-term objective of influencing Nepali politics.\(^5\)_0

As a regional hegemon, India has habitually been involved in the affairs of other smaller countries of South Asia, particularly with Nepal due to its close proximity with India. India’s involvement in the current political conflict has clearly accelerated the Terai Madhesh movement to new heights, and it appears that frequent pleas and visits
by Madheshi leaders to India have finally convinced Indian policy makers to get involved in the Terai Madhesh issue. For example, India’s foreign Secretary, S Jaishankar, visited Nepal just 48 hours prior to the promulgation of the constitution in an effort to convince the Nepalese leadership to make amendments to the constitution to accommodate Madheshi demands. Although not formally revealed, it is suspected that India forwarded a seven-point amendment to the Nepali government as evidence by an article in a prominent Indian magazine, *Indian Express*, Its headlines state, “Make seven changes to your Constitution: India tells Nepal.”61 Additionally, many analysts have viewed the Indian overture as interference on the internal matters of Nepal. For example, S.D. Muni, a strategic analyst, asserted, "There was no point in sending [the foreign secretary] after the constitution had already been passed. It can be construed as interference."62

India’s reservations about the new constitution after September 20, 2015, were felt throughout the country and by all the Nepalese people in the form of scarcity, black market trade, poverty, and a humanitarian crisis. The Indian punitive action has reversed Nepal's development efforts to decades. A Nepalese Government paper reveals that an additional eight hundred thousand people were forced below the poverty line as a result of the blockade.63 The anti-India sentiment in Nepal, in reaction to its perceived political interference matches the suffering brought about by the blockade. The Nepalese media, civil society groups, and academicians have been very critical of what they call ‘India’s micro-management’ in Nepal.

Despite mixed domestic responses, congratulations have poured in from the International Community. China, the European Union and Japan were the first to
congratulate Nepal immediately after the promulgation of the Constitution.\textsuperscript{64} Norway, the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia and the United Nations followed. In contrast, India alone took punitive action against Nepal with an unofficial blockade at the border, denying Nepal with the supply of everyday essentials. Nepal, which is still recovering from the aftermath of the mega earthquake of April 2015, was hard pressed with the embargo. The complete supply system of the nation was severely disturbed. The social fabrics of the nation are shattered and the situation has added threats to human security in a wide scale.

Government

The handling of the Terai Madhesi affair by the incumbent government inadvertently provided the impetus to the Madhesi movement. Many analysts believe the government has not been forthcoming in solving the issue but has demonstrated a easygoing attitude toward the whole affair. Thus, the Madhesi problem remains unresolved, even after a series of inconclusive talks. To date, the government has been able to address only a few demands, which it did by making some amendments to the constitution. The lack of a holistic approach by the government, combined with engaging in cynical power games are major reasons behind the lack of progress. Madhesi groups demonstrated their frustration by submitting a seven-point memorandum to then Prime Minister on March 11, 2016, drawing his attention to the delay in addressing their demand.\textsuperscript{65} Similarly, the inability to bring India on-board with the new political development was a diplomatic failure for Nepalese policy makers. It has been a common practice for Nepalese law makers to visit India seeking help, mostly to suit their own interests. Thus, this time around, New Delhi could have felt “completely betrayed" by Nepali leaders, who had previously made various promises.\textsuperscript{66}
This view was also expressed by former Deputy Prime Minister Kamal Thapa after his visit to India.

Impact on National Security

Defining national security, Walter Lippmann surmised that a nation could be deemed to have security “…when it does not have to sacrifice its legitimate interests to avoid war and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by war....” National security is a blend of the three conceptual frameworks “national interest,” “national power,” and “national stability.”

Nepalese citizens differ in their view of national security. Some solely consider the physical aspect, while others delve more into the humanitarian dimension. However, both tangible and intangible dimensions of national security must be considered. This holistic approach is taken by the promulgated Constitution of Nepal-2015, which states in Part 1, Paragraph 5, that independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, nationality, autonomy, protection of self-respect, rights of Nepali people, protection of boundaries, and economic progress and prosperity are the fundamental subjects of Nepal’s national interest.

Independence, Sovereignty, and Territorial Integrity

There is no doubt that independence and sovereignty remain sacrosanct for Nepal, however the recent Madhesh movement and its associated intrigues have threatened Nepalese sovereignty, especially vis-à-vis her neighbors. The issue has become imperative as India’s role in the overall political conflict has exposed Nepal's underlying vulnerabilities as an independent nation. It appears that King Prithivi Naryan Shah’s metaphor of Nepal as "a yam between two boulders" certainly holds true to this day. Being land-locked and surrounded in three sides by a hegemonic India placed
Nepal in a unique geopolitical dilemma. During the period of Terai Madhesh Andolan in 2008, then Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala had asserted, “If India wants, the Madhesh problem can be solved within a minute.” In light of recent developments, it can be argued that the late premier was indeed correct. B. P. Koirala, the revered pioneer of Nepal's democratic movement, also emphasized the need to build a broader national unity in order to uphold Nepal's integrity and independence. The hard reality of Nepal's geopolitics has long dominated Nepalese politics.

To a large extent, India's insistence on a subservient Nepal that can be micro-managed to suit the former's needs, has raised the Madhesh crisis to its present form. On a discussion program on Nepal's political affairs, S.D Muni, an Indian scholar on Nepal's affairs conceded that the present Terai Madhesh movement has garnered open support from India, which had not always been the case. He further noted that India was standing for the Madhesh although India had never extended her sympathy for them before. India's preoccupation with micro-managing Nepal's affairs was clearly reflected when it did not welcome the new Constitution of Nepal.

Given Nepal's geographical and cultural proximity with India, the latter's involvement in Nepal's affairs has been taken for granted by the leadership on both sides. India played a pivotal role in replacing the erstwhile Rana regime in the 1950s. More recently, India was instrumental in forging the twelve-point agreement in 2005 between the rebelling Maoists and the Nepalese Government. The agreement paved the way for ending the decade-long Maoist insurgency. India similarly played a leading role in drafting the Terai Madhesh agreement between Madheshi groups and the Nepalese Government in 2008. Not all of India's intervention has been benign. India
has imposed repeated embargoes on Nepal under different pretexts and citing various concerns, the endgame for India has always been to compel Nepal to do its bidding.\textsuperscript{75}

The Terai Madhesh uprising of 2007 was instrumental in bringing federalism to Nepal.\textsuperscript{76} The 22-Point Agreement signed between the Government of Nepal and the MJF in 2007 obliged Nepal to transform into a federal country.\textsuperscript{77} Nepal was declared a federal democratic republic on December 28, 2007. These achievements were finally institutionalized with the promulgation of a new constitution on September 20, 2015. Despite these significant achievements, the demarcation of state borders, especially in the Terai region has become a major bone of contention in Nepal's politics. Moreover, the Madhesh movement has posed a major challenge for the implementation of the constitution.\textsuperscript{78}

The Terai Madhesh movement has also agitated for the right of self-determination. Although seemingly a reasonable demand, it has fueled secessionist sentiments among disgruntled groups in the region. Beginning with demands of an autonomous state by the Goit faction, the movement led by Jai Krishna Goit, the leader of Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM), the Madheshi movement has now come to its nadir, resulting in extremist groups calling for a separate and independent Terai state, and demanding that the right to secession be included in the new Constitution. In an unpublished interview with a New York based paper on South Asia in November, 2015, C. K Raut, the activist for Independent Madhesh, argued;

\begin{quote}
Nepal today was forged out of many independent and autonomous states, about two centuries ago. Terai and Madesh people belong to different nations, meaning they have a different history, territory, language, culture, economic structure and aspirations, but they have been ruled by one particular ethnic group, which has been proved as discriminatory and exploitive in nature, to the extent that the whole existence of the
\end{quote}
conquered nations or ethnic groups has been at stake. In such case, it becomes vital that "right to secession" should be provided constitutionally.\textsuperscript{79}

In addition to CK Raut, other Terai-based political party leaders have often reiterated secessionist threats, should their demands not be heard. In an interview with the English daily \textit{My Republica}, Sadbhawana Party President Rajendra Mahato threatened a civil war leading to a separate state of Madhesh if their demands of inclusive federalism were not granted.\textsuperscript{80} Similarly, other radical federalists such as Upendra Yadav, who feels confined to regional politics in the aftermath of political defeat, could join the secessionist bandwagon in a bid to be not left out.

Additionally, the trend of launching protests from the no-man's-land has created its own set of security dilemmas.\textsuperscript{81} The protracted nature of these protests resulted in an increase in cross-border criminal activities such as human-trafficking, arms and drugs trafficking, smuggling of counterfeit currency, kidnapping, robbery, and extortion. Moreover, rebel groups in Terai will resort to border and highway centric blockades in the future to affect political, economic, and social dynamics in Kathmandu.\textsuperscript{82}

\textbf{Impact on Nationalism and National Unity}

The Terai Madhesh movement has unearthed many controversial issues that pose challenges to upholding nationalism and national unity. One of them is the issue of language. The Nepali language has been developing for over 700 years, and remains a major component of Nepali nationalism.\textsuperscript{83} However, the indigenous people of Terai view it differently and demand recognition of Hindi as a state language. This issue has caused violent conflict between local supporters of Hindi and Nepali languages. The language controversy subsided in the wake of King Mahendra's language policy in 1960, which categorically recognized Nepali as the national language. However, with
the Maoist insurgency, the People’s Movement of 2006, the Madhesi and other ethnic uprisings, the Interim Constitution of Nepal officially recognized the legitimacy of the languages and traditional attire of all ethnic communities of Nepal.\(^\text{84}\) Thus, the Nepali language no longer remains a binding factor of nationalism.

Another facet of the Terai Madhesh movement is the growth of communal disharmony caused by rifts between Pahadis (hilly) and Terai communities. This uprising led to the displacement of many Pahadi people from Madhesi dominated areas in the region. As a result, the Pahadi communities fear that a separate Madhesi federal state would result in their displacement from the region or their being relegated to second-class status, and communal violence.\(^\text{85}\)

The Terai Madhesh movement has also instigated the emergence of multi-dimensional identity-based challenges. Tensions are no longer confined to Pahades and Madhesi, but also include conflicts between higher and lower castes, Hindu and Muslim minorities, other regional identities (Akhsanda Sudur Paschima, Khumbuwan, Limbuwan, and Tharu), and so on. Suppressed and marginalized citizens within Madhesi communities have begun to openly challenge and revolt against their former masters.\(^\text{86}\) In view of this trend, it can be reasonably argued that once the issue of delineation and the formation of federal states is resolved, tensions within the Madhesi community will continue. Given its inherent complexity, it will be a formidable challenge for both regional and national leadership.

**Economic Consequences**

Damage to the national economy stemming from the Terai Madhesh movement has been massive, particularly the border protests and unofficial blockades by India during a 134-day period that nearly brought the country to the verge of economic
collapse. This challenge was further compounded by the effects of the April, 2015 earthquake. The cumulative effect of both caused Nepal's economic growth rate to drop from 5 to 3.4 percent in 2015. A recent government white paper predicts only 2 percent growth moving forward. Other macro-economic indicators also remain dismal, with an inflation rate soaring at 10.4 percent.\textsuperscript{87} According to the popular English daily \textit{Kathmandu Post}, the country's exports and imports have also fallen sharply due to the unofficial Indian blockade. Citing a report by Nepal's central bank, the newspaper also reported that exports plunged 25.4 percent during the first three months of the 2015-2016 fiscal year, merchandise imports plummeted 31.9 %, and the tourism industry declined by 46\%.\textsuperscript{88} The overall impact of the movement on the national economy has been huge, and many experts argue that it will take a long time for Nepal to recover from these losses.\textsuperscript{89}

Experts expect that this economic and humanitarian crisis is likely to have a much wider and longer-term impact.\textsuperscript{90} Fuel shortages are expected to push more than 800,000 people below the poverty line due to losses in the agriculture, industry and service sectors. The majority of these people are wage earners, marginalized and low income people. It will be challenging for the government to move the country to the status of a developing country by 2022.

The unrest and the unofficial blockade at the borders have severely impacted the country’s flourishing construction industry and infrastructure developments, halting capital spending and setting back production of cement, pebbles, and bricks, stone and sand among other raw materials.\textsuperscript{91} Disturbance in the supply of fuel has halted the
transport of raw materials needed for construction. This has severely hampered public
construction work.\footnote{92}

The Blockade has even hurt reconstruction from the earthquake. Government
officials and United Nations (UN) agencies responsible for reconstruction work said that
due to the blockade, supplies of essential commodities including construction materials
and raw materials were affected. The bulk of vital supplies were stranded in border
warehouses or in trucks on the other side of the Indian border. It was very clear that
until the crisis ends, rebuilding will remain in limbo due to the lack of fuel to ensure
supplies of essential materials for reconstruction to the earthquake areas

According to the White Paper, there has been a 26.7 percent decline in the
import of food commodities in the first four months of the current fiscal year while the
import of medicines and medicinal raw materials has dropped by 54.7 percent. In a two
month period after the undeclared blockade was enforced at the border, 70.6 percent,
62.8 percent, 73.1 percent, 71.8 percent and 84.4 percent drops were witnessed in the
import of petrol, diesel, kerosene, LP Gas, and Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF),
respectively, as compared to the same period in 2014. There was also a decline seen in
the Letter of Credit (LC).\footnote{93} The political instability and the blockade has also impacted
the internal trade with a heavy slump seen in the trade of rice, pulses, oil, medicine, and
construction materials.\footnote{94}

As the country’s exports and imports plunged by 30.5 percent and 38.3 percent
respectively, the total foreign trade had seen a dip by 37.5 percent. According to the
statistics of Trade and Export Promotion Centre (TEPC), trade from two neighboring
countries i.e. India and China had also fallen sharply.\footnote{95}
The tourism sector has seen the biggest impact from the political unrest and the blockade with a 46 percent fall in the arrival of tourist as compared to 2014/15. Fuel shortages and a shortage of goods have hurt the service sector – including hotel/restaurant, tourism, banking, and transportation sectors; which contribute 50 percent of the gross domestic product. This has had a direct impact on the country’s economic growth rate. In the fiscal year of 2014-2015 the service sector’s growth rate which stood at 6.1 percent would likely to drop to only 3 percent in the fiscal year of 2015-2016.

Similarly there has been sharp downturn in the numbers of tourists arriving Nepal as well as the days of staying, which ultimately affected the hotel occupancy. Overall, tourism sector employment has dropped 25 percent from the same period in 2014. Likewise, due to the shortage of Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF), both the international and domestic aviation sectors related to Nepal are being severely affected. Agricultural production was estimated to go down by 10 percent. Likewise, the production of dairy and meat products were projected to go down by 2 percent. However, the production of vegetables was estimated to remain the same. In 2014, the country recorded around 3.6 million metric tons of vegetable production. But the problem in transport affected the collection of productions and its marketing in the following years. In fiscal year 2014-2015 the growth rate of the industrial sector stood at 2.6 percent which would remain regressive in the next fiscal year.

The health sector was affected badly. The threats to health security were greater for poor people in rural areas, particularly women and children. The biggest victim of the crisis was public health. Essential supplies including medicines remain severely
impacted by the blockade. The humanitarian crisis had adverse impact due to the shortage of life saving medicines, essential goods as well as vital social services.

Pollution, environmental degradation and resource depletion are the threats for environmental security. Environmental degradation in terms of deforestation was one of the biggest concerns brought out by blockade as it has created deficiency in cooking gases and kerosene. It may point out that the lack of fuel due to blockade should have reduced in carbon reduction. It may have been true to certain extent but again, the impact of deforestation was overwhelming. There were two folds demands of woods at the situation; one for reconstruction of houses destroyed by earthquake and other for meeting cooking purposes. Thus, the threats to environmental security due to the blockade can be discussed in two broad headings: increasing demands and adverse consequences.

According to government estimates, more than 33 million cubic feet of timber will be required for the reconstruction of the earthquake-damaged houses. Similarly, to cushion the impact of the fuel shortage, the government then decided to sell 100 kgs of firewood for each household on an average and more to the hotels, restaurants and organizations as a substitute of LPG. Unofficial reports claimed that the demand for energy in the hotels and restaurants was higher than government estimates. Additionally, political instability and limited monitoring have increased deforestation. The increased demand of timber and firewood has necessitated the harvesting of more trees. Therefore, the sharp rise in the demand and use of firewood could undo the gains made by Nepal in minimizing carbon emissions through years of persistent efforts.
Diplomacy

The Terai Madhesh movement and India’s undeclared blockade have moved bilateral relations between Nepal and India to a new low. The majority of Nepalese have developed the perception that the Madheshi movement could intensify due to the support it received from India. While there was a degree of optimism following the Indian Prime Minister’s visit to Nepal, India’s ensuing lack of support of the newly promulgated constitution quickly resurrected Nepalese apprehensiveness towards India. Most notably, India further aggravated the situation when their Prime Minister made the negative remarks about Nepal's Constitution through joint statements with European Union leaders during the 13th EU-India Summit held in Brussels in March 2016 and during a visit to the United Kingdom. Additionally, many analysts believed that the visit to India by then Nepalese Prime Minister Oli did little as both sides could not issue a joint communiqué after the visit. Collectively, poor diplomacy has significantly increased anti-Indian sentiments amongst the general Nepalese population, including the younger generations. The recent visit by the President of India Mr. Pranav Mukharjee to Nepal in November, 2016 has done little to dispel these sentiments.

General Security

Nepal’s overall internal security situation turned volatile and unpredictable since the Madhesh movement resorted to outright violence on many occasions, as evidence during the Tikapur incident in the Kailali district when protestors killed police personnel in a cold-blooded manner. On other occasions, protestors resorted to other violent measures such as killing security personnel while being taken to hospital in ambulances, burning public buses with people inside, pelting stones at vehicles, and instigating physical clashes with other Pahadi communities. The Madhesh Alliance of
political parties with armed groups such as the Jana tantric Tarai Mukti Morcha- Goit (JTMM-G), Terai Cobra; and Madheshi Mukti Tigers greatly increased the chances of communal violence flaring up. Besides physical security, the Terai Madhesh movement also affected food and energy security by disrupting the daily flow of essential commodities.\(^{110}\)

**Government Response to the Terai Madhesh Movement**

The Nepalese government has used all elements of national power in an attempt to mitigate the risk posed by the Terai Madhesh movement. While the government’s actions have been somewhat comprehensive, many analysts believe they have not been adequate enough to sufficiently diffuse the crisis. The government has put forth a substantial effort in negotiating and engaging Madhesh political alliance leaders. These negotiations have proven somewhat effective as evidenced by the January 2016 amendment of three articles in the constitution designed to regulate social justice, alter the formation of the House of Representatives, and revise the electoral constituency delineation commission.\(^{111}\) Furthermore, a political commission was formed under the chairmanship of former Foreign Minister Kamal Thapa and was duly tasked to solve any hurdles pertaining to border and citizenship issues. However, the commission has not been able to make much progress.

The government has also failed to adequately communicate the intricacies of the new Constitution to the Madhesi population or convince them that it is an inclusive and fair document. In an effort to address this problem, the government published the constitution in various languages, launched various awareness campaigns through different agencies, arranged talk programs, and utilized print and television media to highlight salient features of the new constitution. However, the information campaign
has not totally dispelled all misunderstandings among common people in the Terai region due to a lack of Madhesi representation at the ground level.\textsuperscript{112} Common people from the region still harbor reservations and are not sure if their rights are addressed in the constitution. Moreover, negative Madhesi propaganda has impeded the government’s information campaign as evidenced by FM radio broadcasting anti-Pahadis and anti-government programs which further fueled agitation.\textsuperscript{113}

Externally, the greatest diplomatic and political challenge facing the Nepalese Government centers on the need to effectively communicate the utility and efficacy of the new constitution.\textsuperscript{114} Most notably, Nepalese leaders have made a number of high-level visits to India and other international forums to garner support for the constitution from the international community. Similarly, the Nepalese government has implemented diplomatic measures in an attempt to resolve concerns pertaining to the Indian blockade, trade and a transit relation through the India and Nepal jointly formed an Eminent Persons Groups, and has engaged with the Chinese government to seek their support in resolving many of the issues addressed above.\textsuperscript{115}

In an effort to address the bleak and deteriorating internal security situation, police agencies—Nepal Police and the Armed Police Force (APF) were deployed extensively in various districts within the Terai region to secure government infrastructure, vulnerable areas, and vulnerable points. In the aftermath of the Tikapur incident, the Nepalese Army (NA) was also deployed to the region in accordance with the local Administration Act 2028, which authorized the use of the military to assist local authorities during emergencies. The NA was also heavily involved in civic action programs. Thus, in tandem with each other, security agencies also provided escorts to
public convoys, opened highways and secured borders. The NA has also conducted military to military engagements with the Indian Army. During his formal visit to India, the Nepalese Army Chief of the Army Staff put forth relevant issues to dispel misunderstandings between the two armies and was also able to convince senior Indian military leaders that the impending humanitarian crisis in Nepal would also prove detrimental to India's image.

Economically, in response to the blockade, there were many efforts by the Nepalese government to import oil and gas from China, but these efforts failed to yield encouraging results.\textsuperscript{116} However, the signing of an oil trade agreement with China during the visit of then Prime Minister Oli in March 2016 was a considerable achievement.\textsuperscript{117} There were also many diplomatic engagements with India designed to alleviate the economic downturn caused by the blockade, and the government issued a white paper to deal with the energy crisis and formulated various policies in this regard.\textsuperscript{118} However, implementation of the policies has proven to be a difficult undertaking for the Nepalese government. The Madheshi movement and India's undeclared embargo created an estimated economic loss of one (1) billion dollars.\textsuperscript{119}

Conclusion and Recommendations

The two consecutive Terai Madhesh uprisings in 2007 and 2008 succeeded in bringing forth a number of positive outcomes, most notably the institutionalization of federalism and provision of inclusiveness in the state apparatus. Likewise, reforms were made regarding citizenship issues, language issues, and other cultural issues such as the recognition of indigenous clothing as national dress. However, notwithstanding these positive outcomes, the Terai Madhesh problem remained stalled in conflicts and discord with social disparities still prevalent. In 2015, the Terai Madhesh movement
gained momentum largely due to dissatisfaction over the newly promulgated constitution of Nepal, yet the movement has largely been criticized for its lack of coherency and inconsistent demands. Many demands have been varied, encompassing a wide range of issues such as access to high level government positions for naturalized citizens, delimitation of state boundaries, proportionate government representation based on population rates, citizenship, and inclusiveness in the overall governmental apparatus. This has led to some degree of confusion among the supporters of the movement as well, with many people questioning its credibility. Some have even expressed doubt about the overall cause, while other view the movement as a game of power politics, with local leaders vying to garner political support and increase their chance during electoral processes.

The strategy pursued by Madheshi leaders has produced mixed results. Border-centric protests combined with highway disruption proved effective in exerting pressure on Kathmandu; however it has also proved counter-productive because the Madheshi people suffered due to the blockades. The blockade strategy also further alienated the Pahadi community and minimized any level of sympathy the latter had for the Terai Madhesh cause. Likewise, the strategy to garner support from India didn't yield many tangible results. The movement has also been instrumental in adding to an already prevalent political instability and social volatility in Nepal. With the political situation deteriorating to an all-time low, gaps and misunderstandings between Kathmandu and Madhesh have further widened. Such developments have had negative repercussions on the national security of the country, leaving Nepal more exposed to outside interference, as external stakeholders seek to exploit instability to further their cause
and interests. The establishment of unarmed groups under political guises has also proven a major setback in relation to overall law and order. Furthermore, the economic implications have been huge: high inflation, a slow growth rate, and a decline in productivity in the tourism and revenue sectors.

Government measures in dealing with Terai Madhesh movement have also been inconsistent and largely ineffective. Many analysts have asserted that the government has shown a laissez-faire attitude in resolving the Terai Madhesh problem. Notwithstanding these claims, some of the government's efforts have been commendable, such as the amendment of conflicting articles in the constitution and the formation of a high level political committee to address constitutional issues. It can be argued that to a large extent that the failure to reach Madheshi people at the ground level has impeded the government efforts. Notwithstanding the setbacks, it has now become highly imperative for the Nepalese Government to be proactive in solving the Terai Madhesh issue without putting the issues of sovereignty and territorial integrity at stakes.

In view of political, social, security, and economic implications of the Terai Madhesh movement, it becomes imperative for Nepalese Government to formulate and implement holistic measures that encompass all elements of national power. In this regard, the following measures are recommended:

**Political**

Genuine, sincere, and consistent political engagement with dissatisfied groups in the Terai Madhesh should be the order of the day for the government. To begin with, the government must immediately leverage the political mechanism that was formed in February 2016 with the mandate to resolve the issue over federal boundaries. Likewise,
the government must address the remaining grievances of all disgruntled groups through dialogue and negotiation. It should be remembered that the Terai Madhesh problem is primarily a political one and should not only be viewed as a law and order issue. Furthermore, it is also important for the government to win the confidence of Madheshi groups by demonstrating its genuine concern in resolving the Terai Madhesh issue through action. It is equally important for the government to conduct long due local level elections to exercise politics at the local level, which entails to address the grievances of the people. As India has openly sponsored the movement in the Terai, so it is imperative for the government to take India into its confidence while performing political lines of effort. Similarly, the major political parties must extend their outreach to educate the isolated Madheshi people on the benefits of the present constitution.

Diplomatic

Given the degree of international attention over the Terai Madhesh issue, it becomes highly imperative for the Nepalese government to undertake proactive diplomatic initiatives. The government’s number one priority must be to garner acceptance and support of the new constitution from the international community. Importantly, Nepalese leaders must refute through diplomatic means, potentially detrimental domestic and international remarks and comments. It is also crucial to bring India on-board with the new constitution, and to interact with China as much as possible on other pertinent regional security issues. In this regard, the government should be careful to curbing anti-India or anti-China sentiments that may arise. Furthermore, visualizing the geopolitical reality and the question of survival, Nepal must proactively widen diplomatic engagements in a broad front with other developed countries as well as with international organizations.
Military

The atrophied security situation associated with the Terai Madhesh problem must be addressed to ensure governmental legitimacy. All security agencies should be vigilant in monitoring any untoward activities that are potentially detrimental to national security. Mechanisms should be in place to collect real time information of movements of groups harboring secessionist sentiments as well as other armed groups. Security agencies should prepare detailed operational plans visualizing all relevant scenarios, and develop mission-oriented training programs to prepare security forces to operate effectively in a complex environment. Initially, joint and or combined security operations should be led by the military. External military-to-military engagements with neighboring nations and other relevant stakeholders will also pay rich dividends in resolving the Terai Madhesh problem. Furthermore, the Nepalese Army must emphasize achieving a State Partnership Program with the National Guard of the United States of America for training and other suitable engagements as deem necessary. It will be a cornerstone in expanding Nepal’s military diplomacy and engagement in a broad front and not only exert pressure to the India, but also help to achieve legitimacy if military has to be mobilized.

Economic

Measures designed to boost the economy within the Terai region will be crucial in solving the Terai Madhesh issue. Such measures will help bring an end to economic and social disparities in the region, which in essence is the root cause of the problem. To this end, the government should take the initiative to build sustainable infrastructure in tandem with viable economic sector development initiatives (agriculture/ cottage industries/ hydro/ tourism) in the region. The prospect of developing a special economic
zone/hub (northern and southern economic sectors) should also be explored. It is also important to explore alternative ways to import fuel and other essential supplies to Nepal, subsequently reducing dependency from external stakeholders with divergent interests. To further this cause, viable policies to ensure energy and food security should be developed. Strategic investments in critical infrastructure such as airports and highways linking the northern and southern borders should be a priority. Additionally, policy should be developed to maintain adequate strategic reserve of fuel and essential commodities for at least three months. It is also imperative to activate the Eminent Persons Group (EPG), which was formed to review trade and transit issues with India.

Information

The number one priority in relation to information is to effectively communicate the efficacy of the constitution and garner true support of the document at the grassroots level. Hence, an adequate information campaign should be launched that allows the government to proactively reach out to the people and convince them that the constitution actually addresses their concerns by ensuring all relevant rights and privileges. In addition to utilizing all available media resources, the conduct of public hearings/gatherings is equally important to raise awareness among Terai population. The state should develop strong mechanisms to control hate speech, which is detrimental in dividing various ethnic groups. In this regard, Madhesh-based political leaders who are currently in the government should take the lead in their respective constituencies. Similarly, the constitution should be published in various local vernaculars and distributed accordingly.
To India

India must see all Nepalese as friends and understand that Nepal’s prosperity is in its interest. It should recognize that whatever assistance it had provided for the development and alleviation of poverty in Nepal will be ruined if the current situation prevails. India cannot exert her hegemony over her neighboring states. The blockade has pressured the Nepal establishment but at the cost of Nepalese people lives.

Given the deep historical, cultural and religious links that Nepal and India share, careful employment of soft power diplomacy would very likely be a better way for India to express its concerns. Moreover, based on the foundation of international laws, India should try to find the solution through diplomatic dialogue. It will be to the benefit of the people and government of both the countries.

A constitution can be a living document; India must wait for the Nepalese constitution to mature rather than prematurely oppose it. India must acknowledge the fact that after years of political uncertainty, Nepal finally has a constitution which is generally progressive. Suggestions are welcome for amendment, demands are not. Everything except sovereignty and national integrity are open to amendment. It is beneficial for India and Nepal if Nepal is allowed to sort out its challenges on its own.

Endnotes


5 Ibid.


9 Thomas A. Marks, Maoist People’s War in Post-Vietnam Asia (Bangkok: White Lotus Co., Ltd. 2007), 301.

10 John Whelpton, A History of Nepal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 42. Within Nepalese fraternity, the greater Nepal is still remained an intellectual cry.


16 Ibid.

17 Frederick H Gaige, Regionalism and National Unity in Nepal (Delhi: Vikas, 1975), 5.


21 Ibid.

22 Gaige, Regionalism and National Unity in Nepal, 26-29.

23 Ibid., 28.

24 Nepal Madhesh Foundation, Continuity and Change (Kathmandu: NEMF, 2015).


26 Gaige, Regionalism and National Unity in Nepal, 26.


28 Ibid.


30 International Crisis Group, “Nepal’s Troubled Tarai Region.”

31 Mathema, Madheshi Uprising: The Resurgence of Ethnicity, 115-118.

32 Ibid., 119-120.


Mahendra Lawoti, “Evolution and Growth of the Maoist Insurgency in Nepal,” in The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal Revolution in the Twenty First Century, ed. Mahendra Lawoti and Anup K Pahari (New York: Taylor and Francis Group, 2010), 3-11. “In spite of growing economy after 1990 political change, it has failed to reduce the poverty. Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world. Its Gross National Income per capita was US$290 in 2006, the lowest in South Asia except for Afghanistan. In many parts of the country, especially in the hills and mountains, poverty affected large populations. Poverty is widespread in mountains, where its incidence is 56 percent, compared with around 40 percent in the hills and plains (terai). Poverty and economic stagnation had a more detrimental impact on the rural residents (87 percent in 2001). Nepal not only faced class inequality, but extreme socio-cultural inequality also existed among numerous linguistic, ethnic, religious, racial, caste, and regional groups. The Caste Hill Hindu Hill Elites Males (CHHEM) monopolized the political, economic, social, and cultural power. Bahun (Priest caste), Chhetri (Warrior caste), Newar (businessman) and Tarai (People from plain areas of Nepal, who has close family ties with the people from India with many cultural similarities) high caste have better access to material resources while Dalit (Low Caste like cobbler, tailor, black smith etc.) Indigenous nationalities, mid-level Madhesi caste, and Muslims are generally worse off.…. While between 1995-96 and 2003-4 poverty declined by 46 percent among Brahmin and Chhetri, it declined only by 6, 10, and 21 percent respectively for Muslims, hill indigenous nationalities and Dalit. Within all groups, women generally face discrimination but the incidence is higher among Muslims and ‘high caste’ Hindus. In politics, only Bahun and Chhetri are among the effective executive head in Nepal. They are politically dominant to such an extent that even ideological opponents hail from the same group. It is found that the CHHE overwhelmingly dominated 12 influential sectors in 1999: the executive, judiciary, Constitutional Councils, civil administration, parliament, political party leadership, local government heads, and leadership of industrial and commercial, academic, professional, cultural, science and technology, and civil society associations. The majority of high caste people have the representation in the politics.”

43 The United Democratic Madheshi Front (UDMF), which included four Madhesh-based parties—the Federal Socialist Forum Nepal, the Sadbhavana Party, the Tarai Madhesh Democratic Party, and the Terai Madhesh Sadbhavana Party.


46 Birendra Prasad Mishra, *Rebuilding Nepal* (Kathmandu: Bhrikuti Academic Publications, 2007), 162. See also, SD. Muni, *India and Nepal: A Changing Relationship* (Delhi: Konark Publishers Pvt Ltd. 1992), 4. “… these relations have been nursed by a rich and deeply pervading inheritance of historical evolution, geographical contiguity, and social cultural identities.”


49 Marks, *Maoist People’s War in Post-Vietnam Asia*, 301.


51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.


“Nepal Royal Palace Massacre- A Political Conspiracy: Military Aide to Slain King,” *Telegraph Nepal*, December 27, 2010, [http://www.telegraphnepal.com/headline/2010-12-27/nepal-royal-palace-massacre-a-political-conspiracy:-military-aide-to-slain-king](http://www.telegraphnepal.com/headline/2010-12-27/nepal-royal-palace-massacre-a-political-conspiracy:-military-aide-to-slain-king) (accessed January 24, 2017). In his memoirs, Mr. Vivek Kumar Shah, the military secretary to the King of Nepal mentioned that while he was receiving Commando Training at Chakrata of Deheradun, India, he was informed that the Indians had provided similar trainings to Nepal Maoists combatants, Nepal Army personnel and Armed Police Force one by one at the same venue. “India had provided similar trainings to Tamil rebels of Sri Lanka, Mukti Bahini of Bangladesh and Khampa rebels of Tibet at the same place- known as Establishment -22 in Chakrata of Deheredun”. See also, Upreti, “External Engagement in Nepal’s Armed Conflict,” 223-227.

57 “Nepal Royal Palace Massacre- A Political Conspiracy: Military Aide to Slain King,” *Telegraph Nepal*, December 27, 2010, [http://www.telegraphnepal.com/headline/2010-12-27/nepal-royal-palace-massacre-a-political-conspiracy:-military-aide-to-slain-king](http://www.telegraphnepal.com/headline/2010-12-27/nepal-royal-palace-massacre-a-political-conspiracy:-military-aide-to-slain-king) (accessed January 24, 2017). In his memoirs, Mr. Vivek Kumar Shah, the military secretary to the King of Nepal mentioned that while he was receiving Commando Training at Chakrata of Deheradun, India, he was informed that the Indians had provided similar trainings to Nepal Maoists combatants, Nepal Army personnel and Armed Police Force one by one at the same venue. “India had provided similar trainings to Tamil rebels of Sri Lanka, Mukti Bahini of Bangladesh and Khampa rebels of Tibet at the same place- known as Establishment -22 in Chakrata of Deheredun”. See also, Upreti, “External Engagement in Nepal’s Armed Conflict,” 223-227.


60 Upreti, “External Engagement in Nepal’s Armed Conflict,” 233. The Maoists had inconsistently yet repeatedly criticized India, and at times had gone as far as digging trenches (bunkers) to prepare a possible tunnel war with India. However, the Maoists also relied on India to make the peace process successful. In January, 2008, Prachanda, the leader of the Maoist insurgency and chairman of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) publicly acknowledge that on seven occasions he had held confidential meetings inside the Indian Embassy but journalists were able to catch him just once.


“Constitution of Nepal,” 2015, [http://www.icnl.org/research/library/files/Nepal/Nepalconst.pdf](http://www.icnl.org/research/library/files/Nepal/Nepalconst.pdf) (accessed November 23, 2016), 1. See also, Ranadhoj Limbu-Angbuhang, *Challenges to National Security and Safeguarding National Interests* (Kathmandu, Center for South Asian Studies, 2011). A similar view is also supported by Brigadier (Ret.) Ranadhoj Limbu, has defined national security as security and protection of national interests from internal and external threats and challenges. Limbu further asserts that a nation will use all elements of national power in order to safeguard its national interests.


“Rajya Sabha Winter Session 237,” December 7, 2015, You Tube, video file, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rb99bsPm-E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rb99bsPm-E) (accessed November 24, 2016). In Indian Parliament, the member of the parliament Mani Shankar Aiyar’s comments on the situation in Nepal and the state of Indo-Nepal relations, expressing how India ruined the relationship with its most trusted strategic partner by imposing economic sanction.

Mathema, *Madheshi Uprising: The Resurgence of Ethnicity*, 69. The greatest achievement of the *Madheshi Uprising* was that it forced Nepal to be declared as a federal
country. The fifth point of the 22-point agreement signed between the Government of Nepal and the MJF in 2007 is about the reconstruction of the state. The sixth point of the same agreement is about converting Nepal into a federal country. The second point of the eight-point agreement signed between the Government of Nepal and UDMF on February 28, 2008, is about transforming Nepal into a federal state.

77 Ibid., 114.


83 Gaihe, Regionalism and National Unity in Nepal, 108. See also, Mathema, Madheshi Uprising: The Resurgence of Ethnicity, 3.

84 Mathema, Madheshi Uprising: The Resurgence of Ethnicity, 19.

85 Ibid., 2. Such grievances are concerning as the so-called Pahadi communities make up almost 35.78% of the Terai population. Communal violence is also on the rise in many parts of the Terai. For example, ensuing violence in the aftermath of the September 2007 killing of local landlord Mohid Khan in Kapilvastu resulted in 20 people killed and over 5000 displaced. Recently, anti-pahadi campaigns with slogans like Pahadi kutta maro jutta (beat Pahadi dogs with shoes) and Pahadi hato (Pahadis go away) are on the rise.

86 Ibid.


88 Domínguez, “How Protests and a Blockade are Crippling Nepal's Economy.”

89 Ibid.

90 Ibid.


94 Ibid. A heavy decline has seen in import and export. The economy is deteriorating due to a disruption of the transportation of materials for construction activities. In the initial three months of 2015, the goods and service of Rs 191 billion were imported, which declined to Rs130 billion in the same period at 2016. Similarly, in the same period of 2015, there was the export of Rs 22.53 billion, which dropped to Rs 16.81 billion. This is a decline by 31 per cent compared to 2015. The debt burden ratio to the gross domestic product was 24.5 percent.

95 Ibid.

96 Ibid. The number of tourists’ arriving by air dropped from 652,655 in 2014 to 300,325 in 2015. Tourists’ stays in the country have also suffered with tourists choosing to spend only 6 days on average rather than 12.4 days the previous year. Hotel occupancy was at 20 percent of total capacity. In 2014 from mid-September to mid-November, 90 to 95 percent of the hotel rooms were booked; this dropped to 15-20 percent after the Terai-Madhesh movement in 2015/16.

97 Ibid. The number of tourists had dropped 50 percent while only 15 percent tour guides were employed. In this period, 75 percent of domestic flights have been canceled due to the shortage of Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF). In agricultural sector, wheat production was likely to drop by 30 per cent due to the shortage of chemical fertilizer. The annual demand for food from the country stands at 5,345,000 metric tons and until the starting of the fiscal year 2015-16, there was a stock of just 155,000 metric tons raising fears of food insecurity.

98 Ibid. Around 2,200 industries were closed with more than 200,000 employees working in those industries rendered jobless, according to the White Paper. The industries faced problem in making payment to its workers and bank’s interest. The amount of debt piled up due to stranded freight trucks and containers at Kolkata port in India, Indian roads, Indian railways, Raxaul among other dry ports was estimated to have surged to whopping Rs 5 billion. The amount included increasing amount of price of the stranded commodities, of charges levied on parked containers and freight trucks, detention charges, charges of the containers and trucks, warehouse charges and demurrage charges.

99 Ibid.

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid.

103 “Joint Statement 13th EU-India Summit, Brussels,” March 30, 2016, file:///C:/Users/Student/Downloads/20160330-joint-statement-eu-india.pdf (accessed January 18, 2017). The EU and India pledged continued support to Nepal in its reconstruction efforts following the devastating earthquakes in 2015, including capacity building and long term development. They also agreed on the need for a lasting and inclusive constitutional settlement in Nepal that will address the remaining Constitutional issues in a time bound manner, and promote political stability and economic growth.


112 Nepal has faced Maoist insurgency since 1996. The insurgents adopted the strategy of creating political vacuum, which they have achieved through systematic coercion and liquidation of political cadres at the local level. The absence of vibrant local politics has caused negative impact in the development as well as in the political activities.


“India at Loss,” My Republica, October 11, 2015, http://admin.myrepublica.com/opinion/story/29588/india-at-loss.html (accessed December 10, 2016). The blockade imposed by India has crippled the Nepali economy, cutting out basic life supporting supplies, such as food, medicines, petroleum and other daily essentials, all of them imported from the Indian Border States. The blockade has stalled post-earthquake reconstruction works; schools and factories are shut; transport services have completely come to halt; international airlines have almost closed their flights due to the shortage of aviation fuel; and the price of basic necessities has soared. The estimated losses are US $1 billion to the country’s economy and are having a knock-on effect on potential investment and growth. This has come ahead of Nepal’s biggest festive season, starting next week.